

FEB 22 2000

EIS002230

REPRESENTATIVE BACA: Thank you very much. Let me reintroduce myself. I am Congressman Joe Baca from the 42nd Congressional District. I would like to start out my statement, which will only be five minutes or less, probably, so I'll stay within the time limit.

1... First, I would like to thank you for coming today to show you care about the community and its future. I would also like to thank the Department of Energy for giving us the opportunity to express our views on such important issues.

2... The issue is not about democrats or republicans; it's about caring about humanity and making difficult decisions. Congress must not place the safety of the American people at risk in order to accomplish its agenda. So today I stand before you not only as a United States Representative, but also as a concerned parent and resident.

In this immediate area, San Bernardino County has the largest growth of population -- in the immediate area. So I am very much concerned how it impacts. San Bernardino County has the fourth largest growth in the immediate area, Riverside County is the fifth, so this area will be impacted by the decision that not only will be made by Congress, but the president and DOE.

2 cont. Congress has struggled for six years over what to do with more than 70,000 tons of used reactor fuel sitting at commercial power plants. One main concern remains, the risk of transporting highly radioactive spent fuel from our nation's nuclear plants to a central storage site or permanent underground repository in Nevada.

Current estimates are that transportation of spent fuel to Yucca Mountain will involve about 100,000 trucks and rails shipments over a 30-year period. The shipments will go through 43 states and will occur within a half-mile of 50 million residents.

2 cont. As I indicated before, we just had an accident in the area that impacted about 75 cars in the immediate area -- it's probably one of the heaviest used highways in the area, that's Highway 15 -- especially on weekends when we have the Las Vegas traffic that utilizes that as well. So we are very much concerned with that.

Not too long ago we also had a derailment -- Cal-Nev Pipeline had a derailment in the area that exploded and impacted the community, and so we are very much concerned in the immediate area. Current estimates are that 210 to 354 accidents can be expected during this shipment with a percentage of those accidents reaching the highest level of radiation exposure. We should not stand by and allow this to happen to our communities and our children.

3 The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is still in the process of finalizing the transportation routes. However, the likeliest route will truck much of California's radioactive waste along Interstate 15 and along the train tracks straight through San Bernardino County.

4 I am in the process of finding other alternative solutions to this dilemma. And I hope we do find solutions. Other counties have successfully avoided major urban districts so I believe we can do the same. In this area, it will impact rural areas where a lot of minorities also live within that area, a lot of the African-Americans, Latinos, a lot of poor whites, a lot of individuals with low income live in those sites, in those areas, and it will impact them. They are probably not as educated and not aware as to what is going to happen in the immediate area. I'm very much concerned for them, and we need to be a voice for them as well.

- 5 [The controversy of such transportation has focused on the adequacy of the Nuclear Regulatory
 6 Commission system for shipping the casks, the potential consequences of transportation accidents, and
 the routes that nuclear waste shipments are to follow. It has been said that the fuel is so dangerous that
 the nuclear plants must isolate the fuel from human contact for 10,000 years. So why should we run the
 risk of shipping it through our backyards without the proper scientific research before we have weighed
 all other options.]

Nuclear utilities, state utilities, and other regulators have been urging Congress to establish interim
 storage facilities at Yucca Mountain to begin receiving nuclear waste much sooner than planned.

- 7 [If we look at the current situation happening at the power plants today, there are many solutions to this
 dilemma. Recently, at the San Onofre nuclear power plant was shut down, and one of the reactors intends
 to store spent fuel and rods on site for the next decade. That's to store it there immediately.]

- 8... This is one of many options that should be weighed prior to making any decision that would have a major
 impact our communities. Congress has spent billions of dollars on the Yucca Mountain storage site, and
 it is still unknown whether the site is sound or not. As I indicated, it is right near the earthquake faults in
 the immediate area -- with 35 faults identified in the immediate area. Over 600 and some earthquakes
 have occurred in the immediate area.

- 9 Why should our tax dollars be spent on health damages and our health be put to risk without finding out
 all aspects of this issue? Scientific studies show that transporting such materials of potential risk could
 end in catastrophic disasters, and yet no other possibilities are proposed. There is a possibility of a human
 error; and I am concerned for that human error in terms of what happens in this immediate area. That is
 why I am here today, to insure the security of our communities.]

- 8 cont. [Nuclear waste and these serious issues must be handled very carefully and thoroughly.] And I am
 committed to protecting the health and the environment of the 42nd Congressional District, along with
 other districts in the United States. That is my testimony for today, and those of you that heard the seven
 or eight additional questions that were asked.

- 1 cont. Thank you again very much for coming here. [I appreciate the fact that DOE has come to the immediate
 area in response to our supervisors and our U.S. Senator, and then, of course, our predecessor that voted
 against HR 1270 as well.] Thank you.

[APPLAUSE.]

FACILITATOR HOLMES: Thanks. Our next speaker is Supervisor Jon Mikels. I understand you have
 your usual busy schedule today, so we would appreciate --

SUPERVISOR JON MIKELS: Well, thank you for letting me speak. And thank you for taking the time -

FACILITATOR HOLMES: If you can lift the microphone just a bit?